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REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-28 and 30-45 under 35 U.S.C. 103, which are all of the pending claims, as being unpatentable over the prior art, principally U.S. Patents 6,233,565 (Lewis, et al.) and 6,976,162 (Ellison, et al.). Specifically, Claims 1-5, 12, 14-16, 18, 23, 24, 30 and 33 were rejected as being unpatentable over Lewis, et al. in view of Ellison, et al. and U.S. Patent 5,850,442 (Muftic). Claims 6-11, 13, 17, 19-22, 25-28, 31, 32, 34 and 35 were rejected as being unpatentable over Lewis, et al. in view of Ellison, et al.

Independent Claims 1, 6, 13, 24, 25 and 26 are herein being amended to better define the subject matters of these claims.

For the reasons explained below, Claims 1-28 and 30-35 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. The Examiner is, thus, respectfully asked to reconsider and to withdraw the above-identified rejections of Claims 1-28 and 30-35 under 35 U.S.C. 103, and to allow these claims.

Generally, Claims 1-28 and 30-35 patentably distinguish over the prior art because the prior art references do not disclose or suggest obtaining and using a receipt in the manner, described in independent Claims 1, 6, 13, 24, 25 and 26, that verifies ownership of the receipt while maintaining the owner anonymous or pseudonymous. In order to best understand this, it may be helpful to review briefly this invention and the prior art.

The present invention, generally, relates to procedures to issue and to verify ownership of electronic receipts while maintaining the owner of the receipt anonymous or pseudonymous. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, a user is given a pseudonym using a first pair of public/private keys. Using this pseudonym, the user conducts a transaction with a transaction server. Which issues a receipt to the user. In this transaction, a

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second public/private key pair is used. This receipt is sent to a holder, which might be, but is not necessarily, the owner. In another aspect of the invention, the receipt is sent to a verification server, and a further pair of public/private keys is used to verify ownership of the receipt. This is all done while maintaining the owner of the receipt pseudonymous anonymous.

Independent Claims 1, 6, 13, 24, 25 and 26 are being amended to emphasize how the receipt is obtained, and in particular, that the receipt is obtained using a pseudonym that itself was obtained using a first public/private key pair. Moreover, claims 1-28 and 29-35 patentably distinguish over the prior art because that prior art does not disclose or suggest this feature of the invention.

In particular, Lewis, et al. discloses procedures for issuing receipts over the Internet. With the system described in Lewis, et al, goods or services are purchased by a user over the Internet from a server having a receipt generation module. Special transaction software is used to manage the printing of various communications. The procedure disclosed in Lewis, et al. is relatively standard in many respects, except that it is done using the Internet. Significantly, no special effort is made in Lewis, et al. to keep the owner anonymous or pseudonymous.

Ellison, et al. describes a procedure for issuing a pseudonym to protect the identity of a platform and its use. Once the platform receives this pseudonym, subsequent communications can be performed using the pseudonym to help keep the real identity of the platform anonymous.

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Muftic, et al. was cited in the Office Action for its disclosure of a method and system for performing secure electronic commerce. In this method and system, procedures are used to authenticate signed messages. It is important to note that this reference is directed primarily to authentication rather than to confidentiality.

Moreover, it is important to note that neither Muftic, et al. nor Ellison, et al. teaches how to issue and to verify ownership of a receipt while maintaining the owner anonymous or pseudonymous.

Applicants respectfully submit that, in combining Ellison, et al, Muftic and Lewis, et al, the Examiner is using hindsight reconstruction to piece together pieces of the prior art to make the present invention. This is because there is no suggestion in the references for combining them the way that the Examiner has. Specifically, as mentioned above, Lewis, et al. is not concerned with maintaining anonymity, while Ellison, et al. does not suggest how to issue or use receipts while maintaining the owner of the receipt anonymous or pseudonymous. The only blueprint for doing that is found in the present application itself; and, it is respectfully submitted, the Examiner cannot use that blueprint as a guide to reconstruct the prior art.

In addition, even if the references are combined as the Examiner has, that combination still fails to teach or suggest using a pseudonym, obtained in the above-described manner, to obtain a receipt that can be effectively used to authenticate ownership while also maintaining the owner of the receipt anonymous or pseudonymous. The present invention effectively accomplishes this.

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Independent Claims 1, 6, 13, 24, 25 and 26 are being amended to emphasize this aspect of the invention. Specifically, Claims 1 and 24 are being amended to describe the feature that a pseudonym is issued to a user using a first private-public key pair, and that this pseudonym is used, by the user, to obtain a receipt. As described further in these claims, this receipt may be used to verify ownership of the receipt by the receipt owner while maintaining the owner anonymous or pseudonymous.

Claims 6 and 25, which are directed, respectively, to a receipt generation method and receipt generating device, describe the feature that the receipt is issued, including a reference to a designated owner and details for what the receipt has been given, in response to a message from a user using a pseudonym, where that pseudonym was issued using a first private-public key pair. As further described in these claims, the receipt can be used to verify ownership of said receipt while maintaining that owner anonymous or pseudonymous.

Claims 13 and 26 are directed to a method and apparatus, respectively, for proving ownership of a receipt, and these claims describe the feature that a user uses a pseudonym to create a first message including a transaction request and a reference to a designated owner of a receipt. These claims describe the further features that this receipt includes information for what the receipt has been issued and a reference to the designated owner of the receipt and thereby to enable the owner to verify ownership of said receipt while maintaining that owner anonymous or pseudonymous.

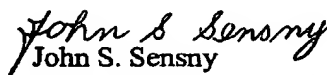
The other references of record have been reviewed, and these other references, whether considered individually or in combination, also do not disclose or suggest the above-discussed aspect of the invention.

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Because of the above-discussed differences between Claims 1, 6, 13, 24, 25 and 26, and because of the advantages associated with those differences, these claims patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. Claims 2-5, 23 and 30 are dependent from Claim 1 and are allowable therewith; and Claims 7-12, 27 and 31 are dependent from, and are allowable with Claim 6. Similarly, Claims 14-22, 28 and 32 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 13. Claims 33, 34 and 35 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claims 24, 25 and 26 respectively.

In view of the above discussion, the Examiner is requested to enter this Amendment, to reconsider and to withdraw the rejections of Claims 1-28 and 30-35 under 35 U.S.C. 103, and to allow these claims. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference with Applicants' Attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,


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